

GOOD STORIES FOR CHILDREN

By Walt McDougall

Tommy Jimplecute, the Modern Theseus, Who Slew the Awful Minotaur With a Poem

Being the Weird Experience of a Little Boy Who Thought He Knew it All

TOMMY ROWLAND JIMPLECUTE was a quiet, modest boy until his head was turned by success. There are few boys who can be unduly praised by teachers and parents without becoming swelled up with pride and vanity. Tommy was no exception to the rule. Of course, I don't believe in continually snubbing ambitious boys as many parents do, for a certain pride is necessary for a boy's success, and makes most of them strive harder to accomplish their tasks, but Tommy had far too much.

He was a smart boy, and while he didn't like arithmetic and grammar any more than other lads, he was always very near the head of his class. One day the teacher proposed as the subject of the weekly composition that wonderful South American bird the great condor, which, as you probably know, is the largest bird in the world, and one which seldom comes down from near the clouds, but soars in the deep blue sky for many hours at a time. When Tommy asked the teacher if he might write his composition in verse she gave him permission, although she was much surprised, as no one had ever heard of such a thing in that school as a poetical composition. This is what Tommy wrote:

*"Little Johnny Squirgum
Was the boy who had the hurt
done."*

*"He loved to shoot the little birds,
And pop them in the eye.
He liked to see them suffer,
This naughty little duffer;
He liked to see them squirming
And he loved to hear them cry."*

*"So Johnny long did ponder
How to pop the awful Condor,
And he hunted for the big bird far
and wide,
Until at last he met him,
But that Condor up and ate him,
And now poor little Johnny's on
the bird's inside."*

All the scholars clapped their hands and the teacher said that he was simply invincible. He would scarcely speak to the other children and he signed his name T. Jimplecute, Poet, whenever he had a chance and even wrote it with chalk on the sidewalk sometimes to see how it looked. He felt very important, indeed, far more than the beautiful poem warranted, although it was so fine, and at last he put on such airs at home that Mr. Jimplecute spoke to him about it.

"Remember, Thomas," he said, "that there are many other poets, and after all, it's not such a tremendous thing to think there's very little money to be made at the business."

"It's not a business," remarked Tommy's sister Ethel Helen, "it's a disease, I think."

"Perhaps it is," said her father.

"If it's a disease," said Tommy, very impudently, "it's one neither you nor I ever get, for it's a brain disease."

For that, Tommy got such a dressing down with his father's scold that he never quite forgot it, and then he was sent to bed without his supper. After he had been in his room a half-hour there came a scratching at the door, and opening it he found there his dog Dan, with a large dog biscuit in his mouth which he had saved for his master, for he knew that he had been sent to bed supperless. Tommy took the dog biscuit just to please Dan, for he knew that he would feel hurt if he refused.

The Terrible Dwarf

About two hours afterward Mr. Jimplecute went to Tommy's room to speak further upon the subject, but Tommy was not there. His bed was all rumpled, showing that he had been in it, and there were all his clothes on a chair, but no Tommy. Mr. Jimplecute went to little four-year-old Ethel and asked:

"Ethel, do you know anything as to Tommy's whereabouts?"

"He looked surprised and wonderfully answered, 'No papa, I don't, but I think perhaps they are in the wash.'"

This is what happened to proud Tommy Jimplecute, the Boy Poet. He had fallen asleep soon after getting into his bed, and then awoke with a start at hearing a funny noise near him. The room was dark, but two bright lights glowed at the foot of the bed, and as he stared at them a form became visible in the gloom, and as it grew more and more distinct he made out the shape of a fearful-looking dwarf not more than a foot and a half in height, who sat on the foot-board of the bed. This dwarf had a head as large as a pumpkin, with an enormous mouth and great misshapen teeth displayed in a broad grin of malice. His eyes were lighted like great balls of red hot iron, and he moved rapidly from one side of the foot-board to the other by wriggling a pair of big feet with long claws.

Tommy watched this movement for a moment in great surprise, for he was not yet fully awake, and then, with a start, he realized that such a hideous thing had no business on his bed. He sat up and stared harder than ever and the thing grinned a wider grin as it said: "Good evening, Poet Jimplecute, the smartest boy in town."

"You upset me," said Tommy, "you asked me so sudden."

"Well, I presume there are few things you can't do, eh?" said the dwarf.

"Well," said Tommy, growing impudent



Tommy Recites to the Minotaur His Star Poem, "The Paraspool of the Dink"

and getting slightly over his fear, for he thought he could call his father if the thing went for him; "I don't know many things I can't do, anyway."

"Can you row this boat?" asked the dwarf, pointing to the foot of the bed, and there, to his immense surprise, right in his room, was a small rowboat with oars inside, and with its bow pointed toward the door.

"Why, how on earth did that get here?" he asked.

"I brought it for you to show me how clever you were as an oarsman," answered the dwarf. "Hop in and take the oars."

Now, Tommy didn't know a thing about rowing, but he was too conceited to admit such a fact, and, just as he was, in his nightgown, he climbed over the footboard and dropped into the boat.

"The way you got in shows how little you know about rowing," said the dwarf, "but you are over the side of your bed, you would never have been in my power either, but you couldn't have been expected to know that of course. Now let me see you row."

"Ah!" sneered the dwarf. "Hop in and take the oars."

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